

COMSTOCK HOMES DEVELOPMENT AND ELLWOOD MESA OPEN SPACE PLAN FEIR

4.7 AGRICULTURE

Section 4.7

Agriculture

4.7.1 Existing Conditions

On July 25, 2003, the City of Goleta issued a Notice of Preparation for an EIR for the Comstock Homes Development and the portions of the Ellwood-Devereux Open Space Plan under the City's jurisdiction. As part of the Notice of Preparation for this project, the City of Goleta determined that the proposed project would not adversely impact agricultural resources.

Portions of the Joint Proposal Area have been used for agriculture in the past (e.g., olive trees), but no areas are currently under cultivation. The portion of the Joint Proposal Area under the City of Goleta's jurisdiction was used in the past to grow eucalyptus trees that were intended to be used as pier pilings in the early 1900s by Ellwood Cooper (Tompkins, 1976). Historically, the Joint Proposal Area, including the portions under the City of Goleta's jurisdiction, has been used as rangeland and to grow crops, including dry farming. This trend began with the arrival of the Spanish missionaries in the late 1700s, escalated in the mid- to late-1800s, involved the conversion of wetlands to agriculture in the early- to mid-1900s, and ended by the mid- to late-1960s when urbanization and development in the area effectively removed any remaining agricultural operations from the subject area.

No active agricultural operations exist on lands under the City of Goleta's jurisdiction within the Joint Proposal Area, including the area proposed for the Comstock Homes Development and the proposed Ellwood Mesa Open Space Plan area under the City of Goleta's jurisdiction.

There are no designated Prime Farmland or lands under Williamson Act present in the project area.

4.7.2 Regulatory Framework

4.7.2.1 Federal Authorities and Administering Agencies

Farmland Protection Policy Act of 1981 protects prime farmland, unique farmland, or farmland of statewide or local importance. As previously noted such lands are not found in the project area. There are no federal regulations governing agricultural resources for the proposed project.

4.7.2.2 State Authorities and Administering Agencies

4.7.2.2.1 CEQA, Public Resources Code §21000 et seq. The basic goal of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) is to develop and maintain a high-quality environment now and in the future. The CEQA Guidelines provide a framework for the analysis of impacts to agricultural resources, including a requirement that any inconsistencies between the proposed project and applicable general plans and regional plans be discussed.

4.7.2.2.2 Williamson Act, California Government Code Section 51200-51207.

The Williamson Act is a legislative effort to preserve open space and agricultural land. The act

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Section 4.7 provides that local jurisdictions may establish an agricultural preserve program having the goal of retaining land in agricultural use (e.g., through implementation of Williamson Act contracts).
Agriculture The County of Santa Barbara has adopted such a program which is codified under the County's Agricultural Preserve Uniform Rules. Both the County's Uniform Rules and the Government Code provide that agricultural preserve contracts between the County and landowners are voluntary. Therefore, there are no state mandates associated with this program. Since no prime agricultural land or Williamson Act contracts exist in the area proposed for the Comstock Homes development or the Ellwood Mesa Open Space Plan area, the aforementioned policies do not directly pertain to this project

4.7.2.2.3 California Coastal Act §30000 et seq. As described in Section 1, the Coastal Act is the only set of policies that applies to development projects within the City of Goleta's Coastal Zone, pending certification of the City of Goleta's Local Coastal Plan. The California Coastal Act Coastal Resources Planning and Management Policies (30241 – 30243) include provisions for the protection and management of coastal agricultural resources by maximizing and maintaining prime agricultural land (30241, 30241.5, 30242) and preserving the long-term productivity of soils (30243). Section 30241 states in part "The maximum amount of prime agricultural land shall be maintained in agricultural production... and conflicts shall be minimized between agricultural and urban land uses..."

4.7.2.3 Local Authorities and Administering Agencies

As described in Section 1, the County of Santa Barbara's Coastal Zoning Ordinance (CZO) and other implementing ordinances (including subdivision, noise, and grading ordinances) were adopted by the City of Goleta but have not been certified by the California Coastal Commission (CCC). Therefore, the City of Goleta's Article II Coastal Zoning Ordinance is considered by the City of Goleta to be a set of administrative procedures intended to provide guidance for those areas of the City of Goleta within the Coastal Zone. Existing and planned land uses in the areas proposed for residential development and open space do not affect agriculture, therefore, Coastal Zoning Ordinance policies related to agriculture are not applicable.

4.7.3 Project Impacts and Mitigation

The proposed Comstock Homes Development and implementation of the proposed Ellwood Mesa Open Space Plan would not result in impacts to agricultural resources since there are no active agricultural operations in the project area and none of the project area is zoned or designated for agriculture. Additionally, no designated Prime Farmland or lands under Williamson Act contracts are present in the project area. The proposed project would also not result in a disruption to any surrounding agricultural operations.

No mitigation for agricultural resources is necessary.

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4.7.4 Cumulative Impacts

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The proposed Comstock Homes Development and implementation of the proposed Ellwood Mesa Open Space Plan would not result in cumulative impacts to agriculture resources.